

DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

The California Highway Patrol is a law enforcement and traffic safety agency reporting to Business, Transportation and Housing Agency Secretary Maria Contreras-Sweet and Governor Gray Davis.



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHP HIGHLIGHTS NEW LAWS

01-50

SACRAMENTO -- Traffic legislation takes effect Jan. 1 that will increase safety for children in vehicles, boost the pool of potential traffic enforcement officers and establish a 24-hour informational telephone number on impounded vehicles.

Among the most significant bills that will have an impact on California drivers beginning in 2002 are:

Child Safety Seats (SB 42- Speier) clarifies last year's legislation requiring that beginning Jan. 1, 2002 children must be secured in an appropriate child passenger restraint (safety seat or booster seat) until they are at least 6 years old or weigh at least 60 pounds. Formerly, the law required children less than 4 years old and less than 40 pounds be secured in a child safety restraint system.

An estimated 1.1 million additional children will be required to be restrained in child safety seats or booster seats under the legislation.

Unattended Children (SB 255-Speier), known as Kaitlyn's Law, prohibits parents or guardians from leaving a child 6 years old or under in a vehicle unattended when the vehicle's engine is running, the keys are left in the ignition or there is significant risk to the child. The law was named for a child who died after being left for two hours in a vehicle in 100-degree heat.

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CHP Age Limit (AB 311-Campbell) raises the maximum age limit for appointment as an entry-level California Highway Patrol officer from 31 to 35 years.

Impounded Vehicles (AB 360-Wesson and SB 783-Kelley) require law enforcement agencies to establish a 24-hour telephone number that provides information on impoundment of motor vehicles and the rights of the registered owner. The bill also requires the vehicle to be released from impoundment in less than 30 days if the driver at the time of the seizure acquires a valid driver's license and proper insurance.

School Buses (SB 568-Morrow) delays the requirement that new school buses be equipped with safety belts. New school buses must be equipped with safety belts effective July 1, 2004 or 2005, depending on the type of bus.

Exhaust Systems (SB 1081-Johannessen) prohibits the exhaust system of a passenger vehicle from emitting sounds of more than 95 decibels, as measured at a properly licensed station.

DUI Drivers (AB 1078-Jackson) revises California law to allow felony manslaughter DUI convictions more than 10 years old to become a factor in sentencing a DUI driver.

Intersections (AB 563-Maldonado) requires all drivers stopped at a red light to yield to any approaching vehicles and any pedestrians lawfully in the crosswalk before turning right or turning left from a one-way street to a one-way street. The bill's purpose is to prevent intersection crashes by clarifying when a motorist may turn on a red light.

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Cotton Movers (SB 964-Costa) allows a cotton module mover to be driven on a highway in certain agricultural counties if the driver has a valid driver's license for that class of vehicle and the cotton module mover meets California Vehicle Code requirements.

Cellular Phones (AB 770 Nakano) requires all traffic collision reports prepared by the CHP and allied agencies to include information as to whether a cellular telephone or other driver distraction or inattention was an associated factor to the cause of the collision. Agencies now collect the data voluntarily.

One bill passed in 2001 that took effect immediately upon Gov. Davis' signing it in October:

Motorhomes (AB 67-Firebaugh) extends the legal length permissible for a motor home from 40 to 45 feet if the vehicle is driven on an interstate or other federally-designated highway. A one-mile exemption is allowed off the designated highways for food, gas and lodging. California residents driving motorhomes greater than 40 feet are required to possess a non-commercial Class "B" license with a medical certification.

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